A DREAM COME TRUE

by

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Rodger carefully put a worm on the shiny hook and casted out the line farther than ever. When it hit the water it made the only ripple the lake had seen in months. He really thought he was going to catch the big fish today. But really he didn't care all that much. It was the seclusion and peace of this place that he loved so much. He could feel the quiet filling him with relaxation. He felt a tug on the fishing line as a hummingbird flew past his face on its way to a beautiful yellow flower. The fishing pole began to bend as the creature on the other side was trying to escape his capture. At that moment everything began to slowly disappear. He tried to fight it from leaving him but it was always a loosing battle.

Rodger awoke to a loud buzzing of his automator that informed him it was 9:00 in the morning and time to get up. He hated to leave that dream he had hundreds of times before.

He was really exhausted this morning. This was happening more and more each time he came out of the Think

Tank. It had only been 8 years since he had been working on Monsoro as the lead member of the program. It was draining every ounce of his energy.

"Blinds", he was able to mutter to the automator through a morning cough.

The metal blinds covering the single window in his sleeping cube retracted upward into a crevasse in the ceiling. The blue tinted light of the Monsoro morning splashed into the sleeping cube causing Rodger's eyes to slam shut more than they already were. The cube was considered to be the luxury accommodations reserved exclusively for the members of the Think Tank. The cube was a thirty foot by thirty foot square with a fold out bed that dropped into the floor and was covered automatically by a carpet tile. This allowed the room to be used as a sitting area during the times of non-sleep. Adjacent to this room on the opposite side of the window wall was a small restroom with a hygiene unit for cleansing and a toilet vacuum. On the other wall opposite the bed there was a small hydro machine unit which prepared his food and drink.

As he tried to open his eyes he could not stop thinking about the arguments he kept having with Antony and Dahlia, two of the other members of the program. They would not abide by the rules of the program in allowing their thoughts

into the system during a Think Tank session. What really was puzzling Rodger was that a member's thought flow was typically uncontrollable once connected in the Tank. He had been arguing with them for weeks now. It was causing noticeable exhaustion in the other members. He kept thinking that they may be doing it deliberately.

He grunted as he slowly sat up in his bed which seemed to take forever. He flipped his legs over the edge of the bed and tried as best he could to manage a small stretch of his arms. He ran his tired hands through his thick black hair, which highlighted his white smooth face. As his feet hit the floor the automator reminded him of his schedule for the day. It consisted of an emergency meeting with the Planetary Counsel at 10:00 and back to the Think Tank at 3:00.

"Pyrocrystals Hot", he said out loud to the hydro machine as he readied himself for the day. By the time he was finished getting ready his drink was hot. Pyrocrystals are small cubes dissolved in water consisting of sugar, iron, and the spice Newhaven, which together are concentrated brain food. He drank it slowly as he looked out the window at the flat plain of the Monsoro landscape. He knew no other sites. He always wondered what other planets looked like. He has no memories of Earth where he was born

and processed. Memory erasure was a requirement for members of the Think Tank. All past memories are systematically disposed of prior to joining the program so as to not interfere with their work. "A hazard of the job," Rodger often joked to himself. Except for that peaceful recurring dream of fishing on that heavenly lake.

The only history Rodger was told concerned Monsoro. He was told that Monsoro was previously one of four moons that circled the planet Neesis some 2.8 lights years from Earth, until Neesis was destroyed by a crude new weapon system testing about 8,000 years ago. This left the system in chaos, with three of the four moons flying off orbit into space. The fourth moon was Monsoro which remained and quickly took a methodical orbit around the local sun to become a self sustaining planet.

As he finished his Pyrocrystals, slightly hypnotized by the sites out the window, the automator reminded him that he had only 10 minutes to get to the counsel meeting. He put on his counsel robe, pressed the exit button and left the cube in a rush.

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When anyone would talk about Monsoro the issue always arose as to the cause of its energy force. It is the only planet that maintains this invisible force surrounding the

planet which can have a very positive or very negative effect. It can bring a relatively simple person to a high level of intelligence and can bring others to never ending depression. The Think Tank program was created on Monsoro in order to use the unknown energy force to increase the already high intelligence of the members; they are using this energy to explain it.

Rodger Stracker was of the highest intelligence ever known. He arrived on Monsoro about 8 years ago in the year 15,863, at the age of 22. Rodger was told that he was born and processed on Earth with no known family. He was never schooled in the history of the Universe nor any other matters relating to anything but becoming aware of his high thinking ability which he was genetically engineered for. He could control his thoughts in a sort of mystical fashion.

He was processed with the sole purpose of becoming a Universe Thinker, as they were generally known; joining only 27 others in this secluded and highly regarded society at the age of 12. Ten years later, after a very impressive record of thought work in other Tanks, he was chosen for the most prestigious Think Tank in the Universe on Monsoro, along with 6 other members, of which Rodger was the lead member.

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The counsel meeting was well under way by the time Rodger arrived in the chambers. In attendance was the Board of Governance on Monsoro which consisted of Caitlin Streemer, the Planetary Governor, Brock Goodman, the Secretary of High Thought Studies of the Universe Control Counsel (U.C.C.), and Alex Dricker, the secretary head of the Think Tank on Monsoro. Along with them were the 6 other Think Tank members already seated. The U.C.C. is based on the planet Railiack and is the main governing body of all known planets in the Universe, with each planet having a Governor who reported directly to this body.

"Excuse my tardiness Madame Governor. I had a difficult time getting up this morning from our long day in the Tank yesterday," Rodger said as he seated himself.

"You should reset your automator", the Governor said with slight annoyance in her voice.

The Governor continued, "Members of the counsel. This emergency meeting will be rather short and to the point. We have a problem. A problem that may cause the potential shut down of the Think Tank program on Monsoro."

"Shut down this project?" snapped Dricker. "Do I need to remind you Madame Governor that this is the mostly highly respected program in the Universe."

"Dricker, the Grand Counsel of the U.C.C. may be

planning to divert all funds from this program to a Think Tank program on Earth designed to study plant species.” The Governor continued, “They consider this Think Tank on Monsoro a waste of time and money to study some energy source on this planet which has no threat or effect to the known Universe at large.”

“Not the Universe at large?” stressed Rodger as he stood up as if to make a planned speech.

He continued, “This program has everything to do with a threat to the Universe. The 7 of us are working on a theory right now in the Tank that this energy may have come from some external source and for a certain reason. While we don’t have the same thoughts on this yet, doesn't the potential of external cause for this energy stick fear in everyone here?” he asked making sure to gain eye contact with everyone in the chamber. “Pretty much the definition of a threat as far as I am concerned.”

The governor interrupted, “Rodger. I understand how you feel but this is not my decision. The Grand Counsel is meeting in a short while in their chambers on Railiack to determine to cut the funding or not. Don't get me wrong. We here are all in favor of and respect the importance of your work in the Tank, especially your current work on the energy source. Don't for a second think otherwise.”

There was a long pause as if she was holding something back.

The Governor continued, "I just feel it necessary to keep you all informed and that is what I have done. I do not want to belabor the point at this time until we have the decision from the Grand Counsel. With that I am going to adjourn this very short meeting until later today when we have their decision. Check your portable displays for an update on our reconvening."

"Meeting is adjourned", the Governor said aloud in formal fashion as she rose from her seat and left through the back of the chamber.

In a loud rush the room emptied except for the members of the Tank.

"Something stinks," Rodger said to the others as he rose to face them still seated.

"The Governor is hiding something. I can see it in her eyes. We need to go to the Tank early today to work on this and come to a conclusion by day's end," demanded Rodger.

"You are making too much of this Rodger," Dahlia, she said with the confidence she always presented.

"It's just that they think we are not important anymore-from a Universe at large perspective. Nothing more. There is no secret they're hiding from us." Dahlia said

sternly. “Personally, I would like to see the program gone. I’m exhausted and we are getting nowhere.”

“Yeah Rodger, we are getting nowhere,” Antony, another member, reiterated like a well trained dog.

Her tone was always indignant. It really angered Rodger to have to hear it. He had written her up to Dricker on various occasions for insubordination but nothing ever came of it.

Dahlia joined the program on Monsoro about 2 years ago. Since that time she has shown herself as very confident and stubborn. She is about 19 years old, with riveting beauty, long dirty blonde flowing hair that always seemed in place and an athletic body well cared for. He could not stop staring at her beauty at times. But there was just something about her he didn’t trust.

“We would not be so exhausted if it were not for you two,” Rodger bellowed at Dahlia and Antony.

He continued, “We would have finished our work on the energy force already if you both would follow the program rules.”

Dahlia stood and pointed at Rodger, “Don’t you accuse me of causing this program to collapse. Antony and I just don’t have the thoughts you all may have on the energy matter. Period.”

"I have seen all the records," Rodger said, "You and Antony are restricting your thought flow into the system. What's the story?"

"There is no story," Dahlia giggled. "You have always been paranoid Rodger. Right from the beginning when I joined the Tank."

"We shall see. I am ordering everyone to the Tank immediately, earlier than our planned 3:00 time," Rodger demanded as he turned his back to them and walked through the exit of the counsel chamber as they followed him out.

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They all made off to the Tank, which was about 20 minutes away from the main complex on the hypertube. They all sat in silence as the blue tinted landscape hurried past. They were told that when the planet was a moon over 8,000 years ago the terrain consisted of a flat grey powder surface.

The mature terrain of today has small bodies of water, mountain ranges of dark black granite, and clay based soil throughout. The temperature always remained at 28 degrees Celsius, even at night. There is no rain, no wind, and no clouds. No weather at all. They did not know any different.

Only a small part of the surface has been inhabited with the main complex consisting of housing, government

headquarters, eating establishments, and scientific laboratories. Separated by about 200 miles from the main complex was the Think Tank constructed deep under the surface. This is where the 7 highly intelligent members spent most of their time.

The atmosphere above and at ground level always had a blue tint to it like a subtle fog. The members concluded in the Think Tank about a year ago that the blue atmosphere was made up of various compounds, all but one of which was known. The last compound has not been identified to date, except that it is the cause of the blue tint. They continued to struggle with not being able to solve this.

As they arrived at the Think Tank station they exited the hypertube and entered a small corridor at the end of which was an elevator. Rodger, as the lead member, identified himself on the retinal access panel to the left of the elevator doors. They all entered the elevator and made their way down 24 levels below the surface. The doors opened about 20 seconds later where they found another corridor about the same length. At the end of this corridor there was a single door with another retinal access panel on the wall.

After Rodger again passed on the panel they entered through the door into a very dimly lit round chamber of

about 200 feet in diameter. The door slammed shut behind them with a locking mechanism audible and echoing in the chamber. They were in complete silence. In the center of the chamber surrounding a round pedestal computer console there were 7 reclining chairs that were 3 feet above the floor. The chairs were all connected by black tubing at the headrests that ran to the center computer console. They took their assigned seats, clamped their legs into the chairs and covered their heads and face with the pyromask.

This mask was made of soft titanium, pliable but metal, and was lined inside with various brain probes that were connected to the black tubing of each chair's headrest. The mask covered their entire head, face, and neck with 2 small breathing holes at the nose.

About 10 minutes passed while they went through their rituals to clear their minds of all matters except their current work-the energy force on Monsoro. They were interconnecting to the system through the mask probes and into the center computer console.

Rodger felt numb and weightless as if his body was not connected to his mind. He began having glimpses of the fishing lake again as he quieted his mind; the serenity of the warm moist air and cool touch of the water. This vivid and lucid image always was there when he was beginning his

work in the Tank. Where was this place? He would always wonder.

The center console is the gathering point for thoughts and would record any thoughts of the 7 members that were in common with one another. The system would automatically dispose of other thoughts that were not in common between them all. Once they all had a common thought it was recorded to the center computer console. This data was later presented in the form of a preliminary written report for review by Rodger, then Dricker, and eventually presented in final form to the Planetary and Grand Counsels. At that point these common thoughts became scientific fact.

Being that all 7 of the most highly intelligent beings in the Universe had the same thoughts on a subject created a presumption that this was the solution to a particular problem as it could not be refuted by anyone more intelligent.

When they were connected they could not control the flow of their thoughts out into the system, no matter how irrelevant or chaotic. They also could not think or feel the thoughts of the others; only their own. Their thoughts were a one way street from their minds to the center console. They were completely isolated.

It was usual for them to process for days, even weeks,

in the Tank resulting in no common thoughts together. It caused a certain amount of frustration and obvious exhaustion.

But today was very different.

Rodger's thoughts today were unusually erratic. He could not stop thinking about the Grand Counsel diverting funding from this program to a meaningless Tank on Earth devoted to thoughts on indigenous plant life; their inability to identify the only unknown atmospheric compound on Monsoro that causes the blue tint; why and how are Antony and Dahlia able to disallow their thoughts into the system; not having any thoughts in common with the other members for so long. There had to be a reason for these and they all had to be connected in some way.

His mind was swimming. His body began to twitch uncontrollably. He felt his connection being lost with the system so he slowed his breathing and cleared his mind again in order to continue.

It had been 5 hours since they entered the Tank, the time limit as ordered by the Grand Counsel rules of the program, at which time the system prepared them for disconnection. They began to remove their masks and the first eyes Rodger met with were those of Antony and Dahlia. Their immediate glance spoke a thousand words as if they

were hiding something and were ashamed. They all hung their masks on the cradle next to the chairs. As Rodger was wiping the sweat from his red face he took on his final duty of coding the center computer console for its pre-report preparation.

The pre-report was programmed to be processed and downloaded to Rodger's portable display unit within 24 hours of a Think Tank session. Today Rodger manually programmed the system to process and download within 30 minutes due to the imminent Grand Counsel decision. He wanted to be ready and armed with any material thoughts that they may have had in common that may help the program's chances of continued funding.

They all headed out of the chamber in a slow methodical line up. No words were to be spoken until out of the Think Tank complex. Again, they found themselves on the hypertube speeding their way back to the main complex. They headed to their sleeping cubes to get some rest before the reconvening of the Planetary Counsel and the decision of the Grand Counsel.

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The pre-report came in on his portable display unit as Rodger was entering his sleeping cube. He sat down on the one chair next to the window. As he scanned the data he

found that four other members, excluding Antony and Dahlia, had a fairly continuous thought stream throughout the session today.

Antony's and Dahlia's report were almost blank in thought. Never before has he seen such a thing. Any thought no matter how trivial or irrelevant was recorded, and later disposed of if not in common with the others. But to be blank? However, within the thought codes of these two he was able to see one thing.

"What the hell is that?" he said out loud as the hair rose on the back of his neck.

Thought codes were presented initially in the pre-report as a series of numbers. They represented brain wave activity which had to be put through the Thought Data Interpretation Software to obtain readable results of the thoughts themselves.

What Rodger could see from the raw data was streams of thought activity in this numerical form. There was a moment of about 10 minutes around the middle of their session where both Antony and Dahlia had the same brain wave activity, starting at the same time and ending at the same time, exactly. Before and after this interval of thought it was completely blank, for both of them. It's as if there was a malfunction in the system. But a malfunction would have

caused a shut down immediately.

He looked at the activity of the other 5 members, including him, during this exact interval and found no match to that of Antony and Dahlia. These 2 were connecting only between themselves; having and not having the same thought streams at exactly the same time.

"This is impossible," he said to himself out loud. The system was designed to disallow such a thing in order to inhibit a faction of members to bias the system. But the data was the data.

He put the data of just Antony and Dahlia through his Thought Data Interpretation Software on his portable display unit, which took approximately two minutes. The result made him drop the display in a thud on the carpet. He fell deep into the chair as his heart began to race. His face was red hot to the touch of his cold fingers that were now covering his face as if to hold in the emotions he had. His suspicions of these two were correct.

Antony and Dahlia have been able to interconnect with each other, hoping the thoughts they were having together would be disposed of before Rodger read the pre-reports after the session, which had typically been the case. Had Rodger not ordered the pre-reports manually within 30 minutes instead of the typical 24 hours he would have never

seen these common thoughts between only Antony and Dahlia. He likely missed them on other occasions when the pre-reports were delivered after a day's time when most non-common thoughts were disposed of in accordance with the rules of the system.

The software displayed the actual events of a very odd series of thoughts between Antony and Dahlia. They consisted of how to continue to hide the issue of Monsoro's cloaking using the blue matter to make room for the new Intergalactic Trade Route; how to hide the issue of the purpose of the Monsoro Think Tank; and how to continue to cause havoc in the Tank.

He panicked as he hurried to run his and the other 4 Thinkers thought activity through the software to compare. The others, but without Antony and Dahlia, were focused on all the same erratic thoughts Rodger was having on the funding of the program and the unknown compound causing the blue atmosphere on Monsoro. But for Dahlia and Antony, they may have had a new scientific fact in process on these issues.

Just at this time his portable unit displayed a message that the Planetary Counsel has scheduled a meeting in 30 minutes. This is it, the possible beginning of the end of his work and reason for being alive. If they disposed of the

Think Tank on Monsoro he feared he would have no further purpose for which he was processed.

Rodger again put on his counsel robe and headed off to the counsel chamber in complete disbelief and anger.

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Before entering the chamber Rodger saw Antony and Dahlia walking up behind him.

“Can I have a word before we go in?” Rodger said with a sense of command. “I had the data from today’s session interpreted. It’s very interesting. Anything you two want to share about any of the thoughts you may have had in the Tank today?”

“Nothing important,” Dahlia said as she looked over at Antony as to speak for both of them. “Another exhausting day without any progress I assume.”

“I think it is important. How are you interconnecting with each other?” Rodger said bluntly.
“I read the data so don’t lie to me,” he said as he pointed his finger at Dahlia.

“Are you being paranoid again Rodger or just want to feel like you can order us all around?” Dahlia said.

“Yeah Rodger, are you paranoid?” Antony said again repeating everything Dahlia says.

“Stop it right now. Before we go in there and I talk

about everything I just read in the reports, I want to give you both the chance to tell me what the hell is going on," Rodger shouted, echoing in the hallway.

"I am sure everyone in there will be very interested at your breach of the program rules in interconnecting with each other and stopping your thought flows during a session."

Dahlia slowly turned and walked toward the wall and sat down on a bench seat. She put her head down and combed her hands through her luxurious blonde hair. Antony sat down next to her as if on a leash Dahlia held tight around his neck. Rodger walked over and stared at them in silence.

Dahlia spoke first. "Rodger, you have no idea what you are getting into here. You may not want to know. They promised that they would take us off Monsoro to safety if we assisted," she said under her breath.

"Assisted who and for what?" Rodger asked.

"I swear you don't want to know. You would be better off."

"Damn it Dahlia. Tell me right now what the hell is going on or I will make sure you don't live safely ever again, even for the next minute."

After a long number of seconds Dahlia said, "Do you know about the Intergalactic Trade Route?"

"Of course I do. The supply route from Monsoro to Earth," Rodger said confidently.

"No, the other Intergalactic Trade Route." There was a long pause then she continued, "There are plans for the installation of a trade route which would allow navigation between Railiack and the other side of the known Universe," Dahlia said through huffing in her breath as her eyes began to well up with emotion. Dahlia was typically the strong stoic figure which was beginning to crack. This made Rodger very uneasy.

"I have never heard of this route before. What are you talking about?"

Dahlia continued as Antony just sat there looking at the ground. "There is a trade route planned which would run from Railiack to the planet Lockneer. There would be no stops in between. An express route they say. Lockneer is planned to house the new base of operations for the U.C.C." Dahlia paused again.

"Forget it Rodger. I will get into more trouble than you know if they find out I told you," Dahlia said as she stood up and turned down the hallway away from the Chamber doors.

"Dahlia. We have been through a lot together over the last couple years, here isolated with each other in the

Tank. I know you feel something towards me as I do to you. You have to come clean now. You owe me that much respect," Rodger said softly as Dahlia stopped and turned towards him with a long pause.

"Ok. Look Rodger. Railiack's atmosphere is collapsing. They say that within the next 100 years or so it won't be able to support life. Something about an irreversible acid forming that will eventually rain down and destroy all life on the planet. Obviously this can't happen being that the head of all matters of the Universe are centered on Railiack."

"Who knows about this and why wasn't I…" Rodger tried to ask.

"Just shut up a minute Rodger and listen. I told you this was not going to be easy to hear." Dahlia proclaimed.

"The U.C.C. has been planning for its relocation for the last 35 years. They have been constructing all the goods and materials for the construction and development of the new base on Lockneer." She continued after a short sob, "These materials now need to be transported from Railiack to Lockneer to start the construction there. The only feasible route for this travel is through this system. That is the problem."

"So what is wrong with that?"

“Monsoro is part of the problem. What you don’t know is that Monsoro is not a moon of Neesis. Neesis was not destroyed, as you were told. It is alive and well some 2.8 light years from here.” Dahlia said.

“You’re right. I don’t get it. Monsoro remained in this system after Neesis was destroyed.” Rodger said stumbling his words.

“Rodger. Listen very carefully. Monsoro is not in the Neesis system. It never was. It is a man made space station laboratory. While you believe we have inhabited a far off surviving planet you really have only been given limited access to this station. You need to know that you are only a four hour shuttle ride from the Earth’s surface right now.”

“Wait a minute. But how is this being hidden from everyone on Monsoro and on Earth?” Rodger said as he tried to remain calm.

“Well that is a two fold question and the most important of all. Figures the highest order Thinker in the Universe would get to the point so fast,” Dahlia said with a grimace. “Have you noticed that you have never really seen any people on Monsoro except the members of the Planetary Counsel and the Think Tank?”

Rodger thought about this for a moment. “What about the people in the sleeping cube complex we live in and the

people at the…" Rodger stuttered as if answering his own question. "I don't understand."

"You have been used Rodger. You were conceived by the U.C.C. over 30 years ago to be the highest engineered Thinker the Universe has ever known. They had hoped that you would be the one to solve the navigational routing problem to Lockneer. You and the other members of the Think Tank were close to working towards that a few years ago. But for some odd reason you all were only able to concentrate on thoughts relating to matters surrounding Monsoro, specifically the energy force and the unknown compound causing the blue atmosphere. You were all nurtured and brought here to assist the U.C.C. in coming up with ways to advance the trade route to Lockneer without taking the measures they now have to take. But that time is gone and action has to be taken. They believe there is no more time." Dahlia finished softly.

"Why did they not inform us of this earlier on when we may have been able to help? Why all the smoke and mirrors?" Rodger asked.

"Well, I don't know everything about this, as they have kept me on a pretty tight leash. What I do know is that U.C.C. scientists believe that the energy force on Monsoro has disabled your ability to have common thought on matters

that were not surrounding Monsoro itself. This explained why you and the other members of the Tank could not think about this trade route in the past." Dahlia said.

She continued after a brief sigh, "I don't know if they are right or not but they could not risk telling you at that point because it would interfere with their goals. They were afraid you and the other members would inform others. So they kept you working in the Tank to essentially kill time until they had the final solution for the trade route problem. Then, when it was time, like now, they would kill the program."

"Do the other members of the Tank know what you are talking about or were they just used like me?"

"Used just like you. Only Antony and I know about this," Dahlia said with confidence as if becoming free from this burden. "The 10 billion people living on Earth also do not know of this."

"How is this being hidden from the people on Earth? Don't they see Monsoro orbiting the planet?" Rodger asked.

"They don't see a thing. The energy force you have been so focused on is the reason."

"Wow. How deep is this energy force?" Rodger asked.

"Rodger, the energy force is a fictional idea that was integrated into the system to create that historical

reference in the members of the Tank, except Antony and myself of course," Dahlia said.

Rodger wiped his face slowly with his weak shaking hands.

"It was placed into the system after the U.C.C. found that you and the other members of the Tank could not come up with a solution to their trade route problem on your own. They did this to keep you all busy while the alternate plan was developed. That is where Antony and I came into play."

Rodger needed a second to let what he had heard sink in. He felt like he had been hit in the stomach; weak, faint, sad, scared.

"What are both of your roles in this and how much of yourself did you need to sell out Dahlia, and you Antony?"

"Once they figured that you all were not going to achieve any solution to the trade route, Antony and I was instructed to make sure the Tank members had no common thoughts at all." Dahlia said.

She got up and stood in front of Rodger and placed a hand on his shoulder. "I am very sorry about all of this but you have to understand that there are more important things at stake here than you, me, the energy force, or any of that other crap."

His head down as if he just found out about the end of

the world, Rodger asked, “Again, how does everyone on Earth not see Monsoro surrounding the planet. How far does this cover up go Dahlia?”

“Rodger, you told me a while ago that you and the others were having the same thoughts on trying to find a solution to the unknown element in the atmosphere causing the blue tint in the air?”

“Ya. It’s been exhausting and unproductive so far,” Rodger said.

“Well Rodger, you had no chance with that one”, Dahlia said. “You see, the system was programmed not to record any thoughts in common on that issue if it came up in the Tank, which it obviously did.”

“My lord. What a waste of time,” Rodger bellowed.

“Just so you know, the unknown element and the blue atmosphere are just parts of the cloaking device that shield Monsoro from being visible from Earth or anywhere else,” Dahlia said.

“Cloaking device?” Rodger asked.

“Monsoro was made and hidden from the Universe to house us Thinkers and the Tank in the hope that we would find a solution to the most important matter the Universe has ever known. Without anyone knowing about it.” Dahlia said.

Dahlia turned and began slowly walking toward the

counsel chamber door with Antony right on her heels.

"Wait a minute Dahlia. What is going to happen now and why do you need safety?" questioned Rodger with a worried look in his eyes.

Dahlia stopped and turned before entering the chamber, with one hand on the door handle.

"The U.C.C. has no other choice but to destroy Earth to make way for the trade route." Dahlia said with a crack in her voice.

"The problem you all were supposed to solve was how the freighter ships filled with the new development cargo to Lockneer could navigate through this system with the gravitational field of Earth being so strong. Under all scientific models prepared, Earth's gravity field was throwing off all navigation equipment and a line to Lockneer could not be reached. In order to create this route line to Lockneer Earth must be removed from the equation."

Rodger slowly bent over as the world was going black in front of his eyes. He felt for the first time in his life that he was irrelevant. He believed he had so much purpose. All that purpose is gone. His mind was swimming. How can he escape to safety? When will this happen? How will they do it? Why can't we start a massive transport of all 10 billion people on Earth out of this area?

"Dahlia. Are they planning on getting us off Monsoro to safety like you? Or are they planning on letting us rot here and be destroyed?" Rodger asked.

"They were planning on leaving you here so you would not interfere with their plans. They really wanted you all to succeed. They really did. They are not as evil as you may think. It was a choice between the needs of the Universe versus the needs of one planet. There are over 40 trillion people in the known Universe Rodger. You know that. Earth is a mere blip on the screen." Dahlia finished, wiping away a few tears, as she entered the chamber room.

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Five minutes later, Rodger composed himself and entered the chamber room with an empty stare. He took his seat in the middle of the Tank members that were all seated along with the typical authority in the front.

The Governor started, "Ladies and gentleman. I have some very bad news. I have been on the telecom with the director of the Grand Counsel of the U.C.C. They have voted unanimously to cease funding for the Monsoro Think Tank indefinitely." There was a small gasp in the room.

"They wanted me to express to you all that the decision was not an easy one. They are, however, allowing a small budget to keep the Tank in tact under very tight

restrictions in order to…” she was cut off by Rodger who remained seated low in his chair.

“Madame Governor. I will not be continuing with the program from this point forward. I feel that I can no longer process my thoughts properly and my duties as the lead member under these new circumstances. Please consider this my resignation effective immediately.”

There was loud chatter and gasps in the chamber. The other Think Tank members were leaning into Rodger asking him the reason for this. Rodger remained silent with his unwavering gaze on the Governor.

“Quite! Quite now!” the Governor shouted as she rapped her wood gavel on the stone table.

“Well. This is most unfortunate Rodger. Could I ask you to expand on your reasons for this?” the Governor asked polity.

“With the funding cut I will not be able to perform as I was planned.” he answered, sickened about the reality Dahlia disclosed to him.

“With that Madame Governor would you excuse me at this time so I may pack my things?” Rodger asked stoically.

“Of course Rodger. However, prior to your departure you must go through the exiting interview process with Mr. Dricker. Please contact him after you have finished.” the

Governor demanded.

"Understood." Rodger said as he rose from his chair and exited the chamber. On his way to his sleeping cube he sent a message on his portable display unit to the 4 other members to meet him in his cube in 15 minutes.

*

Rodger sat in his cube packing his one bag of belongings when there was a squeal on the entry display unit next to the door. He saw a visual of the members outside his door, only four of them – no Dahlia or Antony. He pressed the entry button and they entered.

"Thanks for coming. I know this is all very unexpected but there is something you all need to know now so we can help each other." Rodger said. He spent the next 10 minutes explaining everything Dahlia had described to him. Their mouths almost hit the floor.

"You all need to put aside your emotions right now." Rodger said still with command in his voice.

"We need to get into the Tank before they come for us. By now I am sure Dahlia and Antony have told the counsel that we know everything. They have no intention of letting us get off this place alive. Our only shot is to come up with a solution to the navigation problem the U.C.C. is having. We need to be part of the solution," Rodger said,

"It's our only chance of survival but more importantly our only chance to save the 10 billion people on Earth."

Rodger threw the rest of his belongings into his bag and they all set off to the hypertube station where they boarded as usual. Rodger noticed for the first time that there was really not another person in sight. This had always been the case but he did not realize it until now. His eyes were beginning to open. How could he have been so foolish?

They went through the same series of retinal scans, which to their amazement were not locking them out as they had thought the counsel would have done by now. They entered the Tank chamber, locked down the access and Rodger began programming the center computer console for processing of 5 members instead of the usual 7. Rodger also overrode the Tank system to allow for all of them to interconnect and form thoughts together, as Dahlia and Antony had somehow done. The others clamped into their chairs and began placing their masks around their heads. Rodger did the same.

During the 10 minute preparation for interconnection his mind was initially filled again with the images of the quiet and peaceful lake. This lasted only moments when other thoughts began to flow like they have never before. Rodger could barely keep up with the others. It must have something

to do with their interconnection together. He found for the first time that he may not be the most intelligent person in the Universe. These others, who never spoke a word before, were real masters; geniuses.

Thoughts were flying through their minds together; Alternate navigations systems; the gravity of the sun as assistance to offset the gravity of Earth; Ways to travel through planets without damage at high speeds.

It went on and on for about an hour until they began to have interruption in the flow cycle of the thoughts. The counsel was trying to shut them down remotely. They did not have much time, even though Rodger had re-encrypted the access rights. It would only stall the counsel.

Then it came like a brightly lit miracle he could feel in his mind. The moment of common thought. It was something Rodger never felt before because he would just read about it in his pre-reports. Now that the codes were changed allowing them all to think together, he could see and feel it for the first time. Once common thought was achieved the system shut down as designed.

They all removed their masks at the same time and unclamped themselves from their chairs. They looked at each other in silence with small grins and smirks on their faces as if in disbelief.

“Rodger?” said one of the others who had never spoken before. “Did you feel that?”

“Yes I did my friend. We just experienced a miracle together.” Rodger said more excited than ever before. “And this miracle is going save 10 billion people on Earth.”

Rodger went directly to the center computer console, entered the data into the Thought Data Interpretation Software and ordered a direct report print out from the console itself. The others were standing in silence near the chamber door turning their heads and looking at each other in amazement at what they have done and in such a short period of time. They all felt very proud.

After about 5 minutes Rodger exclaimed, “It’s printing out now and boy is it clear as a bell. Just imagine what we could do when unhindered like this and all interconnected. We should have changed the rule years ago.”

Rodger downloaded the report into his portable display unit and pulled the hard copy out of the console and they rushed with excitement out of the Tank, down the hallway, up the elevator and to the awaiting hypertube. They were all talking together for the first time since they joined the Tank. Rodger had never heard most of them ever speak before.

They arrived at the main complex and to their surprise Dahlia and Antony were in the hypertube station.

“We were just about to leave. You need to follow me right now. Everyone is looking for you. They thought you would go to the Tank and they tried to shut you down.” Dahlia said.

“Yeah, they tried to shut you down”, Antony repeated Dahlia as usual.

They followed Dahlia and Antony down a side corridor. This corridor had a slight decent to it and was brightly lit with white walls. It seemed to go on forever.

“Where are you taking us and why should we follow you?” Rodger stopped everyone in the middle of the corridor.

“Rodger, listen to me. Antony and I screwed up. We were new here and they intimidated us immediately. I didn’t think I could be scared for my safety until just about 3 months after I got here.” Dahlia said out of breath.

“The U.C.C. is in the position to maintain the Universe. It is a huge responsibility representing 40 trillion people at one time. They obviously believe that some have to suffer to obtain it.” she said with a new spark in her eye. “I’m not scared anymore. I want to make this right as best I can. Now follow me and trust me. You have no other choice.”

Rodger thought for a second, looked at the others who all agreed to continue following her.

As they were ran down the corridor Dahlia continued huffing, “Antony and I were monitoring your activity remotely as the Tank counsel removed all the security measures after you left the meeting. I could not believe what you all have done. It is really amazing and we need to get this information to the Grand Counsel immediately, and directly.”

“How do we get the Grand Counsel involved directly? They have always been untouchable to us.” Rodger asked under heavy breathing.

“The members of the Planetary Counsel are readying themselves for departure to Railiack and do not exist anymore as far as I am concerned. They have locked Antony and I out of the transportation array so we have no way of leaving, just like you.”

At the end of the corridor there was a set of metal doors with a retinal scanner to the left of it. Dahlia faced the scanner and in seconds the doors clicked. She grabbed the handle, opened the door and jolted to find a security guard on the other side. She moved to the side immediately and the guard now faced Antony, who dove at the guard’s legs taking him down to the ground before Rodger even made his next step. Antony held his neck until he passed out. He removed the guard’s security badge and weapon and got to his

feet.

"Antony. I had no idea you had it in you." Rodger said with a smile.

"Well Rodger, I am not just a dog running around behind Dahlia all the time. I do have my moments." Antony said as he pushed the guard on the other side of the corridor doors.

Dahlia went to the retinal scanner and in a moment the metal doors locked down with the guard on the other side. Antony used the weapon to disable the retinal scanner and lock the guard out in the corridor.

In front of them was a single door. Dahlia again stood in front of this retinal scanner and the door lock clicked. She opened the door and inside was something Rodger and the other members had never seen before. It was a small dark cold room filled with about 20 large display units and at the base of these there was a full bank of entry keyboards.

"What is this place?" Rodger said as he looked around in wonder.

"This is the main computer complex that controls the Monsoro station. All of the systems and atmosphere are controlled from here." Dahlia said nonchalantly.

"You see the docking station on the left of the center console?" she asked, "Insert your display unit in there. It will automatically download your report into the main

computer complex.” Rodger happily followed her instructions.

After about 10 seconds there was a message on the screen above the docking station. “Download Complete. Press command 4 to send to Grand Counsel complex priority one.”

Dahlia pressed the command 4 button on the keyboard entry. What seemed to be only a moment later the screen read, “Transmission to Grand Counsel complex priority one complete.”

“Dahlia. What did we just do?” Rodger questioned as he held his hands above the keyboard afraid to touch anything.

“We sent the report directly to the Grand Counsel with priority one access. It will be reviewed right now with the same priority as an imminent calamity in the Universe that demands immediate attention.” Dahlia answered.

“Rodger, I am really sorry at what happened here. You don’t know how impossible it was at times to look you in the face and go into the Tank every day knowing that all of your efforts were meaningless. That my only purpose here for the last year was to make sure you all had no purpose.”

He felt like embracing her right now. She was so vulnerable for the first time. It’s as if a wall was broken down and he really didn’t need to suppress his attraction to her any longer. As he began to move closer to her the displays beeped and glowed. On the screen it displayed a

priority one command message from the Grand Counsel complex that he read aloud. “Grand Counsel Message priority one. Rodger Stracker. We have received your report on the most recent Think Tank common thought. Due to the findings and common thought of the Tank members we have unanimously decided to suspend all current action of development of the new trade route to Lockneer. We require all Tank members’ presence in the Grand Counsel Chamber on Railiack as soon as possible to discuss the Tank members various solutions to the trade route line and the timing for your commencement on implementing it. A shuttle is being deployed from Railiack and will be on Monsoro within 6 days to transport the Think Tank members. End of Grand Counsel Message priority one.”

“Well that’s a turn of events isn’t it?” Rodger said jokingly as he turned away from the console to face the others. “I think we all just saved the world!”

He walked over to Dahlia and managed to give her a long awaited embrace which could have lasted for days but for the others in the room.

“Now I can finally get to that fishing lake I have been dreaming about for so long,” Rodger said to Dahlia who leaned in for a long awaited kiss.

THE END.